

PRUNING

R U R A L L A N D S C A P E S



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PROPER pruning is based on common sense backed up by observation and study. When done slowly and thoughtfully by the beginner, it often develops into an art from which genuine pleasure is derived.

Pruning Rural Landscapes

By

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PRUNING shrubs and trees to improve their beauty and usefulness is a fairly easy task. Perhaps the most common obstacle is a lack of confidence. A beginner will find literature on the subject a great help. A lack of sharp tools is also a hindrance which may be overcome. Many people feel that deep dark secrets surround the proper methods of pruning and this often results in neglected and unsatisfactory landscapes.

Pruning Achieves Results

The desired results in pruning are to develop and maintain comfort, convenience and beauty in the landscape. When properly spaced and pruned, shrubs may add greatly to the comfort of a home by making shade and screening where needed and by letting in the sunlight where it is needed.

Pruning helps solve many problems of the home landscape. Overgrown shrubs which are blown back and forth may mar the walls of a house and disturb one's peace of mind. Shrubs allowed to spread into walks, drives and roads are nuisances.

Overgrowth may add many steps to home tasks. Crowding and over development of plants near the house give an unkept appearance.



Shrubs allowed to spread into walks, drives and roads are nuisances. Pruning is needed here for the sake of convenience.

The beauty of many landscapes would be improved by pruning off old branches to bring about new and symmetrical growth. By proper pruning, trees may be made to form many small branches which will not break as readily in the wind as would a few large ones. This is a feature which needs attention in the windy portions of Texas. Pruning helps in the natural process of plant growth. Mother Nature herself prunes away many buds, twigs, and even large limbs by permitting them to die.

Begin Pruning Early

Careful thinning of buds in the cutting bed, and pinching the tips of the longer branches produce sturdy plants. If left unpruned, young plants may produce a few long slender branches. At transplanting time

much of this growth will need to be cut off and discarded.

When shrubs are transplanted from the nursery or the woods to the home landscape, they need to be pruned. If they are balled and burlapped with a large amount of soil about the roots, they will need less pruning than when transplanted bare rooted. Any portions of limbs or roots which are bruised, split or otherwise injured should be removed before planting.

Prune Winter and Summer

Winter pruning is recommended for a large number of plants. Pruning in the winter tends to develop vegetative growth. Severe pruning in summer and early fall should be avoided for it may stimulate growth which will be injured by cold. Prun-



Shrubs not pruned give an unkempt appearance to the surroundings.



Pruning of shrubs adds to the attractiveness of the house and lawn.

ing once or twice each year eliminates the need of severe trimming at any time. The amount of pruning needed will vary with rainfall, soil and climate.

Among the plants which should be pruned in winter are the broadleaf evergreens like privets and pyracantha, and deciduous shrubs that bloom in late summer like vitex, and crepe myrtle.

Shrubs which bloom in the spring or early summer should be pruned just as soon as the blooming season is over for it is then they begin forming bloom buds for the next year. Among these are such plants as bridal wreath and flowering peach. Late summer and winter pruning lessens the amount of blooms for it destroys these new buds.

Evergreens like cedars, arborvitae and junipers are difficult to prune. For this reason they should be planted where large growth is needed, unless one will give the constant pruning needed in order to maintain the desired sizes and forms. This can be done a little at the time all during the year. Only the dwarf varieties should be used as foundation plantings for small or average houses. When left uncrowded they usually develop good forms without pruning.

Some kinds of pruning may be done at any time. Dead limbs, diseased limbs and limbs that chafe each other should be removed regardless of season. Some plants need continuous pruning during the growing season. Among these shrubs are abelia and Italian jasmine which have a tendency to send out long

awkward shoots. If the terminal buds are pinched or cut off the plant will grow into a compact form which is generally more desirable than a shrub with a few long sprouts. Hardy shrubs that grow vigorously, such as Armur River privet or Japanese ligustrum, may be safely pruned during the growing season.

Start Pruning Like This

Remember that to keep rural landscapes in harmony with the informal spirit of the country, natural or informal landscaping is generally used for farm and ranch homes. In most rural homes, there are seasons during which the landscape must be neglected for crops. Plants trained to look natural do not show weeks

of neglect like plants pruned into unnatural forms such as globes, walls and cones. The natural shape of a plant is more graceful and usually more attractive than artificial forms.

Remove dead and diseased limbs first. Then remove those that are chafing or rubbing. It is often advisable to cut limbs at the center or back of a shrub as well as a few at the front, to encourage the plant to maintain a natural appearance.

All cuts should be sharp and clean, leaving no stubs. A limb which is to be cut from the main body should be cut at the growth ring and parallel to the limb from which it sprang. In heading back top growth or side growth, cuts should be made



Naturalness should be the aim of all pruning.



Thin plants may need to be thickened by cutting branches near the ground.

just above a bud pointing in the desired direction of the new growth.

In removing large branches of trees, make an undercut first, so as to avoid the splitting of limbs from the main body of the tree.

It is a good idea to disinfect tools when diseased plants are pruned. Gasoline or alcohol may be used for this purpose.

When the object in pruning is to reinvigorate old shrubs, much of the plant or sometimes the entire plant may be cut off two or three inches above the ground. From the established root system, young growth will spring up. This is frequently necessary with such plants as elder berry, French mulberry and native sumac.

If it is not deemed desirable to cut all the growth, one-fifth or one-sixth of the growth should be cut near the ground. It is well to reach inside and down to the base of the plant in order to get those branches which lack vigor and those which have a rough appearance. Plants with many sprouts like bridal wreath and bunch honeysuckle are easily pruned in this manner. In shaping hedges or screening plants, it is well to leave them wider at the bottom than at the top so that sunlight may reach the lower branches and help to keep them in a healthy condition.

Root Pruning is Useful

Shrubs which are of vigorous growth like the Armour River privet stunt nearby plants unless their roots are pruned. Root pruning and top

pruning may be done at the same time. A long narrow spade may be used. It should be thrust into the ground to a depth of 8 to 14 inches. If the roots are too large to be cut in this manner, a narrow trench may be dug to a depth of 8 to 14 inches. After clipping the roots the soil should be repacked. Galvanized sheet iron can be used as a barrier to further growth of roots. It may be desirable to check some of the plants in this manner so as to hold them to the size of the place which has been allotted to them. Root pruning tends to check vegetative growth and encourages the production of blooms and fruit.

Sharp Tools Lighten Work

For a successful and easy job of pruning, tools should be sharp and clean. Dull shears or saws make hard work and leave ragged cuts which

may result in diseased plants. For keeping the ordinary landscape in good condition, a pair of short handled pruning shears, a pair of long handled pruning shears and a saw are needed. If these tools are lacking, much good work can be done with an ordinary wood saw and sharp heavy knives.

It takes courage and determination to cut back plants which for months or years have been encouraged to increase in size. Armed with these two qualities, the first step is to study the plants and decide what results are desired.

Unless one is accustomed to pruning, the job should be done very slowly, taking out one limb at the time and standing back to study the effect, using the imagination to decide what the results will be when growth has taken place.



The first step in pruning is to study the plants.



These shrubs need to be reduced in size. They have grown too tall and too wide for convenience and beauty.

Question Before Starting

1. Do shrubs need to be changed in size and form to maintain a pleasing landscape? Have they grown too tall for the places in which they are standing? Has their width increased until they are crowding each other? Do some plants need to be removed entirely? If such conditions prevail, a reduction in size and number will improve appearance.

2. Are the plants thin and spindly? Which branches may be cut to produce a compact growth? Are they too dense? If they are, pruning should begin at the ground and often at the center.

3. Are some of the plants beginning to look old? Has the bark on them become scaly and do they otherwise show signs of age? Cut out some of

the lower branches and let fresh sprouts come up from the ground.

4. Have some of the plants outgrown their places and taken space which is needed by other plants, walks or drives? Such plants should be removed, or reduced in size.

5. Do limbs or parts of limbs nearest the ground to the outside form a natural facing of foliage? Could you prune so as to give this naturalness and grace to the plant? Avoid pruning shrubs so they will look like small shade trees.

6. Are the plants of a pleasing variety of heights? Are they monotonous by all being the same size?

Judge Your Work

First of all the less a shrub shows to a passerby that it has been pruned

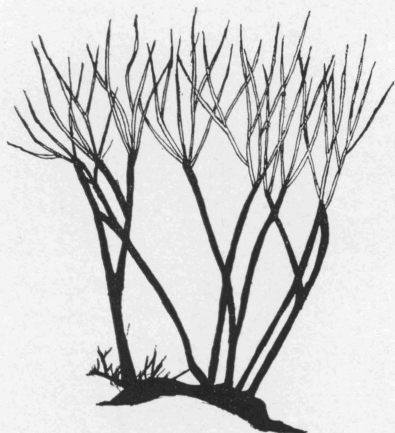


Here are recently pruned shrubs which show but little trimming.

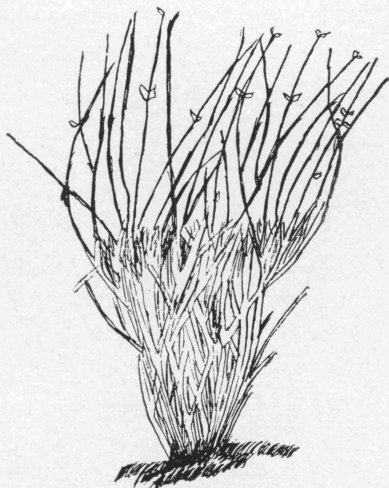
the better the pruning. Shrubs that have been allowed to grow several seasons without cutting back will look bare when first pruned. The second test is after one season's growth has taken place, one can judge whether or not the job was done right. Here one may observe mistakes and profit

by them the next time pruning is to be done.

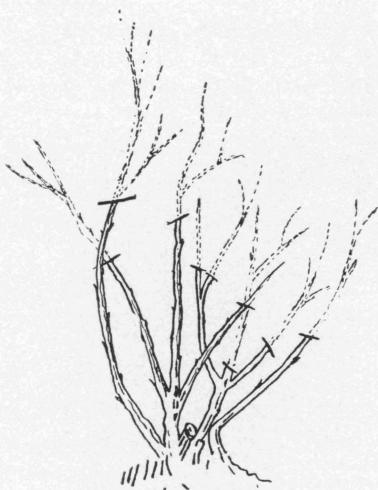
If mistakes are apparent, that should cause no discouragements for a vigorous plant will soon cover them up and the beginner can do better next time.



Cutting all limbs at an even height gives an awkward and unnatural appearance. This type of pruning results in growth as shown at right.



This plant was pruned incorrectly. The appearance will be improved by cutting off at the ground one-fifth to one-half of the oldest sprouts and weakest branches.



Limbs cut at different lengths from the ground help to maintain a graceful and natural form.

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